



Ambassadors in Action

Summer 2003 Edition

Welcome to the fourth edition of *Ambassadors in Action*. The intent of this newsletter is to provide a regular communication vehicle for our community of Ambassadors where we can share information on our experiences and ideas.

Attracting talent continues to be a priority for the Alberta public service (APS), and you perform an important role in promoting the APS as an organization that provides diverse and challenging work, with opportunity for ongoing growth and development.

Public Affairs Bureau Ambassadors

By Rob Harris

Ask any Public Affairs Bureau (PAB) ambassador why the Bureau is such a great place to work and you're bound to hear an earful. But it won't be a run-off-the-mill cookie-cutter script that attempts to sell the PAB as a great employer. What you will hear are some real-life stories; a true sampling of what it's like to be a PAB employee working on the day's emerging issues with some of the most talented individuals in the business.

"Audiences seem to get hooked when our ambassadors describe an average day on the job," said Elaine Dougan, Director of Human Resources at the PAB. "Not only because of the wide variety of interesting work our ambassadors do, but because of the excitement and enthusiasm they have toward their work. The audience can sense that and, in turn, they become interested in finding out more about the Bureau."

Since the PAB instituted its ambassador program in 1998, Bureau staff have spoken to hundreds of students from across the province about the many benefits the PAB has to offer new graduates.

Kim Hunt, a Public Affairs Officer (PAO) with Alberta Environment, recently spoke to a group of Grant MacEwan students at an International Association of Business Communicators event. "The students were surprised how much opportunity exists within the Bureau to learn and grow as a communications professional," said Hunt. "I told

them how fun and rewarding a job with the Bureau can be."

Heather McLachlan, a PAO at Alberta Learning, recently attended a career fair at Mount Royal College in Calgary. She spoke with students about the PAB intern program, and described the great deal of experience she gained during her time in the program. "The students were quite surprised with the learning opportunities that are available through the internship program," said McLachlan. "For someone fresh out of school, the ability to work in three different ministries in an environment that supports learning is invaluable."

By promoting student practicums, work placements, job shadowing and the internship program, PAB ambassadors are providing students with the information they need to become a member of one of the most respected communications organizations in Canada.

Alberta Learning PAO Josepha Vanderstoop recently had a chance to show a Grant MacEwan public relations student what an average day is like in one of the Alberta government's busiest communications branches. "Job shadowing is a great way for students to see what happens in a PAO's everyday work environment," said Vanderstoop. "It gives them the chance to see how the communications material you're working on today can be in tomorrow's news and it highlights how government offers wonderful opportunities to work in this exciting career."

By annually visiting public relations students at colleges across the province, PAB ambassadors are presenting the Bureau as a great choice for graduates who are seeking a challenging and fulfilling career. According to Kim McCrary, Lead Ambassador and Human Resources Consultant at the Bureau, it's an approach that works. "Our ambassador program has done a phenomenal job attracting a wide range of skilled, professional graduates to work for the Bureau," said McCrary. "A great deal of credit has to go out to our team of ambassadors, and all Bureau staff, who work with these students. They're the driving force behind the program's success."





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Career Fairs

Students and recent graduates continue to be one of our target groups of potential employees, so it's important to maintain a strong presence on campus. We plan to sponsor a corporate Alberta public service booth at 12 career fair events over the next year (specific details can be found in the recently updated 2003/04 Career Fairs document in the Ambassador Toolkit). There are several university career fairs coming up early in the fall that you've probably heard about already, and your Lead Ambassador will continue to touch base with you as we receive invitations to these events throughout the year.

To help you prepare for a career fair, have a look at the resource information in the Ambassador Toolkit. As well, I'd like to share some information that was developed by Infrastructure/Transportation Ambassadors and handed out at the last Ambassador orientation session:

TOP 10 QUESTIONS STUDENTS ASK AT CAREER FAIRS

10. From which faculties do you hire?

For example, Infrastructure & Transportation would answer: Engineering, Business, Architecture, to a lesser extent business (accounting, computer majors), computing science, law, economics/political sciences.

9. I have a degree in "e.g., Psychology" - do you hire people with this degree?

If your department does not usually hire from a specific faculty, refer them to a department that does. (To give you a better sense of what faculties other departments hire from, the Lead Ambassador team has developed a cross-government reference - *Who Do Ministries Hire* - that outlines the educational backgrounds ministries typically hire. You can find this document in the Ambassador Toolkit, "Cross-Government Resource Information" section.)

8. How important are the "soft" skills?

Exceptionally important for all positions. Must have excellent verbal, written and interpersonal communication skills. We are interested in well-rounded staff who not only are skilled technically, but who also demonstrate professional behaviors and competencies. The Government of Alberta has developed a set of competencies that apply to all government employees. These include things like communication, teamwork, client focus, problem solving/judgment and organizational awareness.

7. What do you do?

Personal Response - "I have a great job... There are lots of opportunities for a career since there are so many departments, and such a variety of jobs in each department."

6. Do you like your job?

"Love It! ..." Tell them what you like about it and working for the department...the government.

5. Can you tell me about the organization's environment?

"Of course...Positive, empowered, supportive, diverse, challenging, etc."

The government is very interested in the wellness and professional development of our staff. Various programs exist to support and enhance "the employee's life." Many department-wide functions are held to encourage employees to know each other socially as well as professionally.

Learning, development and training are well supported and this is something that the research indicates is valued by young people in their choice of employer. Example: Intern Program.

Everyone works hard and often has more than enough to do - no boredom. The government also supports the professional development of





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staff and may fund most of the professional development endeavors of staff (i.e., professional memberships, training, conferences, etc.). There are a number of departmental internal resources and programs that support professional development as well (e.g., mentoring programs, internships, job rotations).

4. Can you tell me about the hiring process?

We advertise our positions online in our employment website (The Bulletin Online at <http://www.jobs.alberta.ca>) and in the printed publication of The Bulletin. As well, some jobs are posted directly to the schools such as the Intern Program.

Resumes are screened and those who best meet the qualifications advertised are invited for an interview.

Interviews are approximately 45 minutes in length and the questions asked will target experience/ knowledge, abilities/skills, and interpersonal skills. All interviewed candidates are advised of their status following the interview process. Candidates are welcome to call the Human Resources Consultant for feedback.

3. What type of resume/interview question do you prefer?

A chronological resume that describes work performed, role, dates of employment, and place of employment. Include the supervisor's name as well. (See above for interview questions.)

2. How, when and where do you advertise positions?

See #4 above.

1. Are you hiring?

YES – (but not in all fields all the time!)
Encourage them to check the employment website often for upcoming opportunities.
Online job opportunities can be updated daily,

and The Bulletin publication is published once a week. There may not be anything in their field right now, but that does not mean that there won't be something next week, next month or further in the future. We want to encourage them to consider the APS throughout their career as a viable employer!

Try to have an awareness of recruitment activity in your department. What's currently being advertised, what might be coming up soon, and how can people find out about them? For example, will you be hiring summer wage staff? Or will you be hiring interns, and if so, when will you be advertising for them?

As well, it's helpful to have a sense of the established internship programs across government. The student information in the employment website contains information on specific internship programs with which you can familiarize yourself.

Beyond Career Fairs...

Career fairs are a great way to raise the profile of the APS, particularly with students. But there are other ways to connect with potential future employees that allow you and your Ministry to target Ambassador activities to audiences that meet your specific recruitment needs. Some examples might be to:

- Represent your profession as a guest speaker
- Organize and present an information session – perhaps partnering with Ambassadors from other Ministries in similar occupations or locations
- Mentor a potential employee
- Identify yourself as a contact for prospective employees who are interested in more information on what it is like to work for the APS

I encourage you to think about ways you can develop and strengthen relationships with specific target groups of potential candidates, and meet with your ministry's Lead Ambassador/Ambassador



an initiative under the

Corporate Human Resource Development Strategy



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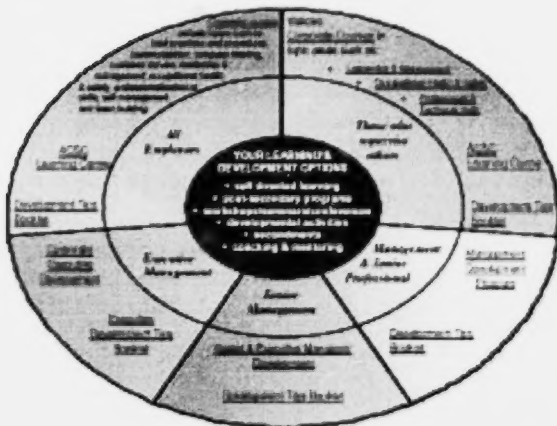
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Team to discuss ideas and how you can initiate contact with these target groups.

Did you know?

There's a new *Alberta Public Service Guide to Learning and Development* that outlines and links to various learning and development initiatives – check it out at www.pao.gov.ab.ca/toolkit/guide/learning-development-guide.pdf.

Alberta Public Service Guide to Learning & Development



You may personally find this guide very useful, and with regard to your Ambassador role, it's a great resource to highlight when you're speaking to potential future employees. The opportunity for professional development is often highly valued, and this guide demonstrates our commitment to being a learning organization.

We Want to Hear From You!

We're interested in your thoughts and ideas! If you have feedback on the newsletter, if you would like to become involved with the regular production of the newsletter, or if you have an article you would like to contribute, please contact kerri.schlemko@gov.ab.ca.



